



# Safety Canada

THE MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADA SAFETY COUNCIL

APRIL 2009

VOL. XLXIII No. 2

## Driver Fatigue: Falling Asleep at the Wheel

On the night of May 10, 2008, Dawn Rousse Graham was driving to her mother's house for dinner with her three children, Adrianna, 13, Stacie, 10 and 8-year-old Bryan. Meanwhile, an 18-year-old college student, who had been up for more than 24 hours studying for finals, was driving home. In an instant, the college student's car crossed the centerline and collided with Dawn's car, killing Dawn and two of her children instantly. Adrianna survived the crash, but her face has been left scarred. Her scars serve as a daily reminder of what happened to her siblings and her mother on that fateful night.

The cause of this tragic collision did not involve drugs or alcohol, but rather lack of sleep – the young driver fell asleep at the wheel. Driving while fatigued is comparable to driving drunk, only there is not the same social stigma attached. Like alcohol, fatigue affects our ability to drive by slowing reaction time, decreasing awareness and impairing judgment.

Driving while sleep impaired is a significant issue, and is no longer tolerated. Legislation is beginning to change by handling collisions cause by a fatigued driver as seriously as alcohol-impaired crashes.

Everyone knows we need a good night's sleep to feel sharp. Sadly the impairment caused by tiredness is understood by too few. Drowsy drivers put themselves and other road users at risk. An alarming 20 per cent of Canadians admit to falling asleep at the wheel at least once over the last year.

According to the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, fatigue is a factor in up to 21 per cent of motor vehicle collisions, resulting in about 400 deaths and 2,100 serious injuries every year. At 21 per cent, fatigue would rank as the third highest measurable cause of collisions behind alcohol impairment and speed-aggressive driving.

***"Please don't drive when over-tired. Drowsiness is an impairment."*** That's the message from the Highway Safety Roundtable. The group is dedicated to eliminating collisions caused by driver fatigue.

"An ordinary healthy person will get unmistakable warning signs," says Randy Williams, Co-chair of the Roundtable and CEO and President of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. "Once a driver starts yawning and fidgeting, it's time to get off the road."

"People need to better understand the risks associated with fatigue," Williams says. "We don't think drivers have got the message yet." Fatigue impairment is a new issue that governments and police are only beginning to engage. Some provinces like Ontario and Quebec have strategies to reduce crashes caused by fatigue impairment. But there are few

*Continued on page 2*

## Inside

Feature Story: Driver Fatigue: Falling Asleep at the Wheel .....	1
President's Perspective .....	2
Wheels in Motion: Slow Down, My Daddy Works Here .....	3
On the Job: "Unretirement" .....	3
Sports and Leisure: Blazing Trails: In-Line Skating .....	4
Seniors: Medication Mixing .....	5
Kwiz Korner: Bike Safety .....	6
Did You Know? .....	6
On the Job: Germs: Here, there and everywhere.....	7
Public Safety: Stranger Danger.....	8



# President's Perspective

Yet again, the House of Commons justice committee is considering a lower blood alcohol level for the Criminal Code. Many organizations, safety and other, including the Canada Safety Council, oppose the proposal to move from 80 milligrams of alcohol to 100 milliliters of blood, down to 50. The Canada Safety Council appeared before the Committee on February 25 in support of our longstanding position.

Canada's practice of not using criminal law for drivers less than 80 mg per cent blood alcohol level is in line with the approaches taken in other countries. Canada's impaired driving laws are among the strictest in the western world. Lowering the criminal limit would nullify many effective countermeasures now in place. If criminal charges were to be laid below the current threshold, that many more, if not all, would be challenged. Our courts can barely handle the significant number of cases before them now. A significant concern and risk in reducing the criminal limit below a point most Canadians would consider unreasonable is that it would encourage contempt, disrespect, and disdain for the law. Unquestionably, this would weaken the resolve of the criminal justice system (police, courts) to enforce the law. The current criminal BAC limit has been universally accepted by Canadians and the criminal justice system for well over 35 years. Tinkering with this criminal limit could well open the doors to a barrage of defense challenges! Frivolous criminalization will not protect the public. There is absolutely no evidence that charging low-BAC drivers under the criminal code would prevent more deaths and injuries than measures now in place in provincial and territorial regulations.

When it comes to dealing with impaired driving, the current administrative and criminal sanctions in place in Canada provide a well thought-out mix of effectiveness, efficiency and severity. Let's keep it that way. Statistically the higher BAC level drivers cause the most carnage. What is needed is to increase the perception of apprehension, and to improve the system's efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with impaired driving offenders.

## Safety, It's an Attitude



Jack Smith, President

*Continued from page 1*

dollars spent. "More needs to be done," says Cliff Mackay Roundtable Co-chair and CEO and President of the Railway Association of Canada. "We need a change in attitude towards driver fatigue. If you are fatigued, you are impaired."

There are many factors that contribute to fatigue when driving, including not enough sleep the night before, or a constant lack of sleep, which could be caused by a sleep disorder. Also, driving for long periods at a time can cause the body to become fatigued, even if you have had plenty of sleep. The Highway Safety Roundtable is running Public Service Announcements in Ontario and working with partners across the country to spread the word, and raise awareness about drowsy driving.

*For more information visit [www.fatigueimpairment.ca](http://www.fatigueimpairment.ca)*

**Written with help from the Highway Safety Roundtable.**

*The members of the Highway Safety Roundtable are the Brewers of Canada, Canada Safety Council, Canadian Automobile Association, Insurance Bureau of Canada, Railway Association of Canada, and Tourism Industry Association of Canada.*

## Recognize the signs of fatigue:

- loss of concentration
- drowsiness
- yawning
- slow reactions
- sore or tired eyes
- boredom
- irritability
- missing road signs
- drifting out of your lane
- nodding off

## Tips to avoid drowsy driving:

- drive only when rested
- keep your mind alert
- find a safe place to stop if you feel drowsy
- avoid sugary and fatty foods, and drinks, instead drink water and eat high-protein snacks
- drive defensively

## WHEELS IN MOTION :

# Slow Down, My Daddy Works Here

With the arrival of nice weather, there will be an increase in road maintenance and road construction. Unfortunately we will also see an increase in highway speeds as motorists push the pedal to the metal. Speed alone is dangerous, but when doubled with construction zones, this combination can be fatal.

Road maintenance and construction crews are out there maintaining and improving our roadways for all motorists' safety. The least we can do is think of their safety.

As a reminder to motorists, construction zones, which have workers present, are NO SPEEDING ZONES. Most construction zones have reduced speed limits, so it is law that you must slow down. If you are caught speeding over the posted limit where there are construction workers present, the speeding fine will be doubled. This is true for the majority of

jurisdictions throughout Canada. Also, you may risk losing demerit points.

When you encounter road construction, slow down for everyone's protection and obey all signs, even when there are no construction workers on the road, because there may still be some other road hazards present.

### Tips for driving through construction zones:

- Obey all signs – they contain essential information about traffic conditions, road closures and detours.
- Obey workers holding up traffic signs.
- Drive at the posted speed limit.
- Maintain a safe distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. Don't tailgate. Sudden stops are common in construction zones.

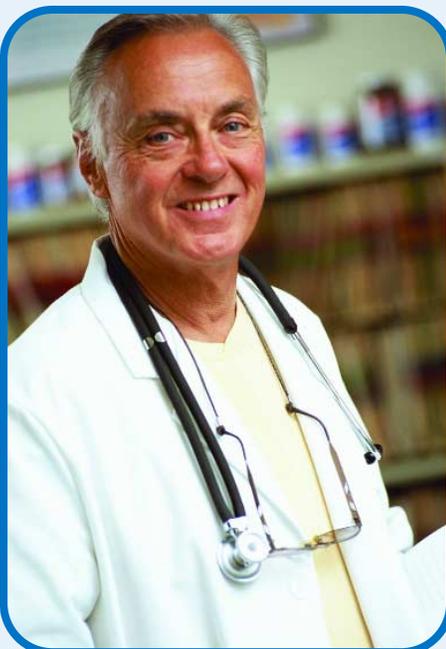
**Slow Down, My Daddy Works Here** is a PSA produced by the City of Calgary to address the risks faced by construction workers on a daily basis while working in construction zones.

Source: Ontario Provincial Police



## ON THE JOB :

# 'Unretirement'



Sun Life Financial released a report on Canada's first ever Unretirement™ Index. The report states that many Canadians now expect to work longer than in recent years. Nearly half of working Canadians believe they will be working past the traditional retirement age of 65 – the average age has been 61 in recent years. Nearly all of those who expect to work beyond age 65 cite one or more lifestyle reason for working longer, including remaining mentally active, enjoyment of their jobs, and the interaction with their co-workers.

Of the top three reasons Canadians identified for working past 65, none were about money or finances. And when asked to pinpoint their number one reason for working after 65, non-financial reasons still emerged at the top of Canadians' list. Assessment of their

health/physical fitness/diet is much higher than views of their personal finances, government benefits, employer benefits, or the general economy.

Working Canadians are torn between optimism and pessimism about their expectations of retirement. On a scale of zero to 100, the Sun Life Canadian Unretirement Index survey found working Canadians on the fence at 50 – the exact middle-point between optimism and pessimism.

In order to achieve the lifestyle they want, Canadians are working beyond the age of 65 (unretirement), and this is actually Plan A for some. For others, unretirement is their Plan B – they need to work longer to pay for basic living expenses, or to achieve the quality of retirement they want.

## SPORTS AND LEISURE :

# Blazing Trails: In-line Skating

Approximately one million Canadians are in-line skating, and the numbers continue to grow. It provides an excellent cardiovascular workout and helps develop balance and coordination. But as the number of people in-line skating has increased, so have the number of injuries resulting from this activity. The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) has seen a steady rise in the number of children and youth treated for in-line skating injuries. From 1998 to 2002, 397 children and youth were seen for in-line skating injuries at CHEO. In addition to those children seen in CHEO and other local hospitals, many of these injuries are treated in doctors' offices and walk-in clinics, or go unreported.

According to a report by Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention program (CHIRPP), 962 in-line skating injuries were reported in the period of a year. About 60 per cent of injuries reported were experienced by males and 10–14 year olds. Half of these injuries were the result of a loss of control, leading to a fall, with no specific cause. Fractures represented about 48 per cent of all injuries. These numbers continue to grow as the amount of people who in-line skate increases.

One of the most common in-line skating related injuries are broken arms and wrists. Skaters often try to break their fall by extending their arms to the front, side or behind them. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, as many as two-thirds of in-line skaters do not wear safety gear. Most in-line skating injuries are preventable.

The following tips will help to keep you safe while getting fit this season.

### Safety tips before you head out:

- Always wear protective equipment: elbow and knee pads, light gloves, wrist guards, and especially helmets – which SIGNIFICANTLY reduce head and brain injury. Also, wearing pants and long-sleeve shirts can help prevent scrapes in the event of a fall.
- Choose good-quality skates that fit your feet and ankles properly. Using loose skates will not provide adequate ankle support and control. Bring socks, when purchasing, to ensure a proper fit.



- Check skates regularly to make sure they are in good condition. Replace worn wheels and the brake. Make sure the wheels are securely tightened and are not blocked by debris or grass.

### For beginner skaters:

- Begin skating with a five-minute, slow skate to warm up; you will be less likely to tear muscles.
- While skating, keep knees slightly bent, which will lower your centre of gravity, and keep your body balanced on the balls of your feet.
- Practice stopping by bringing the foot with the heel stop forward until the heel stop is next to the toe of the other foot. Gently bend your front knee while lifting your toes up. This motion will bring you to a stop. This is known as the "heel stop."
- Accept the fact that falls will happen and practice falling on a soft lawn or a gym mat.
- Before using any trail, achieve a basic skating level, including the ability to turn, control speed, brake on downhills, and recognize and avoid skating obstacles.

### Rules to stick to while hitting the paths:

- Skate on the right side of sidewalks, bike paths and trails. Pass on the left as cars do, after yelling, "passing on the left." Don't pass without warning.
- In densely populated areas, be especially watchful for cars and other traffic when crossing roads and streets. Remember that you must obey all traffic regulations.
- Watch for changes in skating trail conditions because of traffic, weather conditions or hazards such as water, potholes or storm debris. When in doubt, slow down. Do not skate on wet or oily surfaces.
- Exercise caution when near a park. Sand on path surfaces can cause your wheels to jam up; as well kids could dart in front of your path unexpectedly.

Source: The City of Ottawa, CHIRPP, and National Safety Council

## SENIORS :

# Medication Mixing

**Do you or someone you know, take multiple medications each day?** Keeping track of several medications can be tough for many seniors. Taking combinations of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications could produce harmful interactions. It is important to do everything you can to avoid medication errors. Errors can keep you from feeling your best, or at the worst, they can lead to hospitalization or even death. To prevent mistakes, ask questions at the doctor's office, pharmacy, or hospital, and follow safe medicine handling procedures at home.

While there are no comprehensive national studies done on the frequency of medication errors, some information suggests that it is one of the most common types of adverse events in health care. In a recent national study, adverse events in Canadian hospitals, drug – and fluid – related events accounted for almost 24 per cent of events identified, second only to those related to surgery.

More than a third of reported hospital drug errors involved persons aged 65 and older. This may be because they are more likely to take multiple medications. Seniors represent about 13 per cent of the Canadian population, but they take almost 40 per cent of prescribed drugs.

Also, seniors may be more susceptible to drug errors because they are likely to use more than one pharmacy and/or doctor. A survey by the Commonwealth Fund found that the more doctors a patient saw and prescriptions they had, the more likely they were to report having experienced drug errors and medical mistakes.

### Questions for your doctor and/or pharmacist:

- ✓ Does this interact with any other medications I take?
- ✓ What does this medication treat?
- ✓ How will I know if the medication is working well?
- ✓ What are common side effects?
- ✓ What if I miss a dose?
- ✓ Are there special instructions, such as – to take before breakfast or avoid certain foods?
- ✓ Can I drink alcohol if I take this medication?
- ✓ Should I use care with any activities, such as driving?
- ✓ Does the medication require special storage?

### Doctor visit action list:

- ✓ Bring a list of current medications, along with dosages and directions, especially if you see more than one doctor.

- ✓ Add information on any over-the-counter products or supplements taken; ie daily low-dose Aspirin®.
- ✓ Make sure your doctor checks your current medications for interactions with any samples you are given.

### Safe medication practices:

- ✓ Update medication lists as changes are made.
- ✓ Get your medications from only one pharmacy. This ensures all of your drug information will be on one database, making it easier for the pharmacist to check your list for possible adverse drug interactions.
- ✓ Read patient information sheets.
- ✓ Use medication reminders, such as pill box organizers, or watch alarms.
- ✓ If you are having difficulties taking your medication, whether it be remembering to take your pills or when to take them, have a family member help you out by organizing your pills or setting up a reminder schedule.

Source: CIHI, Safety.com, and Health Canada



## KWIZ CORNER : **Bike Safety**

### Questions

- I should ride on the side of the road facing traffic, so that I can see the traffic coming.**  
True or False?
- It is the law that every bicycle rider must wear a helmet.**  
True or False?
- Once you're on your bike on a street, you must behave like any other vehicle?**  
True or False?
- Cyclists should ride in single file.**  
True or False?
- Most bicycle injuries involve motor vehicles.**  
True or False?
- Children have fewer bicycle fatalities than adults.**  
True or False?
- A bike that is too big or too small is a safety hazard.**  
True or False?

- Answers**
- False. You must ride in the same direction as the cars do.
  - False. In five provinces in Canada it is mandatory for children under the age of 18 to wear a helmet. Other provinces do not legally require bicycle helmets\*. \* We recommend that all cyclists wear a helmet.
  - True. Bicycles are considered vehicles and therefore must follow the rules of the road.
  - True. It is much safer to ride in a single file and stay as far away from the cars as possible. In some parts of Canada, it's the law.
  - False. But 90 per cent of cyclist deaths do involve motor vehicles.
  - True. In 2001, there were 60 bicycle fatalities - 36 per cent age 19 and under, and 64 per cent over 19.
  - True. You should be able to straddle the bike with both feet on the ground.

Source: CoHealth

## Thank You

Canada Safety Council would like to thank Bridgestone Canada Inc. for their ongoing support of Elmer the Safety Elephant's website and programs. New safety information will be provided for kids on [www.elmer.ca](http://www.elmer.ca) each month. Also Bridgestone in part, supports Elmer's Flag Program in schools across Canada.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Although many people know the sport as "rollerblading," the term Rollerblade® is a registered trademark of Rollerblade Inc., and should not be used as a generic term for the sport.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Hospitalizations related to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in Canada increased by 72 per cent in just less than a decade. (Source: CIHI)



### DID YOU KNOW?

56 per cent of family physicians younger than 40 are women.

(Source: CIHI)

## ON THE JOB :

***Germs: Here, there and everywhere******Did you know that most workspaces have hundreds of times more bacteria than a toilet seat?***

Toilets are often cleaned and sterilized on a weekly basis, whereas your workstation may not be. Dirt and bacteria can become trapped in your keyboard, on your mouse, and anywhere around your desk. Many cleaning crews will stay away from the computer area, for fear of damaging equipment. It is up to you to keep your workstation clean and germ free.

Dr. Charles Gerba, a microbiologist at the University of Arizona, discovered that the average office toilet seat had 49 germs per square inch. Desktops had almost 21,000 germs per square inch, and phones had more than 25,000 germs per square inch. Desks, phones, computer keyboards and your mouse are key germ transfer points because people touch them so often, Gerba said, adding that coughing and sneezing can leave behind "a minefield of viruses" that can live on a surface for up to three days.

Here are a few recommendations to help you avoid those pesky germs and bacteria in your workplace:

***Wash your hands***

We all know that we need to wash our hands – children are reminded of this daily – but sometimes adults need to be reminded as well. The key is to wash your hands properly. Wash for 20 seconds with soap and warm water. This is better than a quick squirt of hand sanitizer at your desk. Water

penetrates much deeper; helping to remove food debris and other particles that hand sanitizer just doesn't reach. Although, a hand sanitizer is a good option when you are on-the-go.

***Clean out your keyboard***

Most office cleaning companies do not touch computers or keyboards because they don't want to risk causing any damage. Hygiene is left to the employee, and many don't bother. Gerba suggests using an alcohol-based sanitizer for cleaning the keyboard. Simply blowing compressed air over it



is not going to remove bacteria clinging to the surface. The best practice is to disinfect AND use compressed air.

***Protect your face***

Office workers touch their hands to their faces an average of 18 times an hour. When we touch our faces, we bring all the collected gunk from our keyboard, desktop or phone right to our respiratory and digestive systems every three and a half minutes – bacteria and viruses couldn't ask for a better transportation system.

***Dispose of unwanted food***

People often eat at their desks or store food in the drawer. Crumbs can accumulate and provide a giant breeding ground for bacteria. Unclean work areas can pose hazards to a worker's health and a liability to the business.

Women spread more germs in the workplace than men – a controversial fact indeed. But before women take offense, the higher germ concentration is proof that women have a healthier diet than men. Women, Gerba found, tend to store apples, bananas, and other biodegradable, healthy food at their desk, while men go for less nutritious and therefore less germ-ridden junk food. Dispose of any unwanted or uneaten food immediately. Don't keep it around for it to be forgotten and pushed to the back of your desk drawer.

***Don't let germs crawl***

Bacteria and germs can multiply and make their way from one cubicle or workspace to another. Gerba recommends taking note of your neighbor's hygiene practices, and to take precautions so that the sharing of bacteria doesn't occur.

## PUBLIC SAFETY :

# Stranger Danger

When parents give their children a general warning such as “never talk to strangers” they are running a risk. At some point in time, their children may need a stranger’s help and they have to be taught the difference. A good example of this predicament is the case of an 11-year-old boy who was lost in the woods. When volunteer-strangers searching for him came close to finding where he was, he was frightened and deliberately hid from them. This story ended on a happy note and the child was eventually found, but one can see the need for clarifying and understanding the message of “stranger-danger.”

Nothing replaces close supervision of children, especially for pre-schoolers who are unable to identify threatening situations. When children start to develop social skills and judgment, they can be taught how to respond to different real-life circumstances. One of the most valuable lessons to give children would be to practice “what if” scenarios. Help children identify the appropriate and safe responses when they are at risk, such as getting lost in a mall versus getting lost in the woods, being approached in the park or being offered a gift. Also, remind children that adults would not ask a child for help without the approval of a parent. Role-playing scenarios that have children act out the proper reactions (including loud vocal statements such as “You are not my father! Let me go!”), can give them confidence to react in real-life situations.

These imaginary scenarios are an opportunity for children to learn to identify people that are safe to approach (e.g. a uniformed officer, a store clerk or a mother with children). They also present an occasion for parents and children to look at other strategies such as having a password. Finally, a child should know his/her name, address and phone

number in case of separation. This information should not be made obvious on lunch boxes or knapsacks. If a stranger speaks to a child using his name, the child may mistakenly assume that he/she is a friend.

Although children should be wary of strangers, abductions are usually carried out by individuals known to the child, not strangers. In 2004, there were 67,266 missing children in Canada and less than one per cent of these children were abducted by strangers. This implies that telling children not to talk to strangers is simply insufficient advice. Moreover, children are exposed to mixed messages. On the one hand they are told not to talk to strangers but then they are encouraged to say hello to a stranger at the supermarket line-up. Bottom line is that children must learn to trust their instincts and when in doubt, they should seek out an adult that they trust.



# Safety Canada

Safety Canada is the member newsletter of the Canada Safety Council, an independent, national, not-for-profit safety organization. It is also published online. While strenuous efforts are made to ensure the content represents the best current research and opinions, no guarantee, warranty or representation is made by CSC as to the absolute correctness or sufficiency of all information, and CSC assumes no responsibility therewith. Articles may be printed with credit, except those copyrighted to other organizations.

ISSN: 0048-8968

Canada Safety Council

1020 Thomas Spratt Place, Ottawa, ON K1G 5L5

Telephone: 613-739-1535 Fax: 613-739-1566

President: Jack Smith Editor: Valerie Powell (ext. 228)

Website: [www.safety-council.org](http://www.safety-council.org)

Charitable BN: 11882 8565 RR 0001